



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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Technology Bond FAQ

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Technology Infrastructure Bond Will Support Teachers, Students

What is the Technology Bond?

The 2012 General Assembly included a certificate of participation for \$20M in the FY 13 enacted capital budget to will expand wireless access to classrooms across the state over the next three.

What is the Goal of the Technology Bond?

The goal of this project is to ensure that within each classroom, each and every student will have the same access to the tools of the 21st century. With wireless technology in every classroom, all Rhode Island students will have access to opportunities for digital learning, including virtual classrooms, online instruction and communication, interactive instruction, instructional gaming, blended learning, on-line assessments (such as the PARCC assessment that Rhode Island will implement statewide in 2014), and many other facets of 21st-century learning that will prepare our students for success in the global economy.

Why do we need the Technology Bond?

Last year, the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE) conducted a preliminary survey of access to technology in schools across the state. Our findings were:

- only 23.8 percent of classrooms have 100-percent wireless access;
- Although most classrooms have wired access to the Internet, this access is usually limited to one computer – the teacher's; and
- student access to computers through labs and laptops covers less than 7 percent of classrooms at any given time.

In short, Rhode Island schools and classrooms do not have the infrastructure to allow students and teachers to access the Internet and other on-line resources that they will need to advance teaching and learning.

Will all communities benefit from this initiative?

All LEAs will be eligible from the bond proceeds regardless of their current condition or their current level of access to technology. LEAs that have

previously implemented wireless access to their classrooms will be afforded an opportunity to upgrade existing infrastructure including, routers, switches, servers, etc. RIDE will work one-on-one with those districts (Smithfield, Lincoln and North Providence) that had already initiated this process after July 1, 2012 to be sure that they are in alignment with specific requirements to quality and substantiate their requests for reimbursement. Effective immediately, no LEAS will be reimbursed for wireless services unless the services are provided by vendors identified through the RFP process.

How will RIDE determine the criteria for eligible expenses and project timelines?

RIDE will be establishing a small work group that will include representatives from LEAs to guide the process. Based on feedback from the work group, criteria will be used to assure equity across all LEAs. The workgroup will:

- recommend a list of eligible services for reimbursement
- participate in the RFP technical review committee for the selection of state approved vendors that will provide services to LEAs
- Assist in developing the work plan that will include the sequencing of services to LEAs

How will RIDE determine funding to LEA?

Every district will be evaluated using a site survey by a state approved vendor. The vendor will be responsible for evaluating items such as electrical capacity in a classroom, signal integrity, interference, security, and power sources. Ultimately, the results of this survey would specifically map out a plan on how to ready each school's infrastructure for wireless access.

Based on the site survey, a vendor will install wireless access points for each classroom, as well as the necessary switches, wiring, and network controllers to bring wireless access to every school and every classroom in Rhode Island.

How do we access services?

RIDE will issue a request for proposals (RFP) the week of September 24, 2012 for vendors to conduct the site surveys and to develop the specifications for each school building. The RFP will also select qualified vendors to for the installation of the wireless infrastructure. A master price agreement (MPA) will be established as a result of the RFP process. LEAs will be allowed to select from a list of approved vendors on the MPA for the wireless services. RIDE has targeted December 1, 2012 as the date LEAs can begin accessing services from the MPA.

Who will pay the vendor for the site review and installation?

RIDE will pay the vendor directly for the site reviews and the plans that scope out the specifications for the school buildings. LEAS will be provided grants based on the building specifications. This strategy for the disbursement of funds may change based on the vendor responses to RFP.

It is important to note that this \$20-million investment can also leverage federal funds from the E-Rate program. Based on the number of enrolled students living in poverty

(eligible for free or reduced-price lunch), schools are eligible to receive up to 90 percent in matching federal funds for investments in technology. Most schools in Central Falls and Providence would be eligible for these matching funds; many schools in Pawtucket and Woonsocket would be eligible as well. Bond proceeds will only be provided for these schools to support the state match in order to leverage the federal E-Rate funds.

Who will make sure that this project succeeds?

With input from the Budget Office, the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association, and the Rhode Island Society of Technology Educators, RIDE will manage this Bond. RIDE will continue to work closely with all school districts to assess the needs of each school, to invest these funds wisely, and to provide students and teachers with the resources and support they need to make our schools America's best. RIDE will be accountable to the State Budget Office and the General Assembly for effective oversight of these funds.

RIDE understands the urgency for the implementation of this initiative and will continue to keep you updated on the process. If you have any questions concerning this, please contact Cynthia Brown at cynthia.brown@ride.ri.gov or 222-4257.

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